



State of Arizona Department of Education

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Charter Holders, Principals, and Test Coordinators

FROM: Yovhane Metcalfe, Ph.D.
Chief Accountability Officer

DATE: October 1, 2014

SUBJECT: **Alternative School Status Application/Recertification Window & Process**

The window for schools to submit new alternative school status applications or recertify alternative school status is now open. All schools that wish to be considered as a new alternative school for the 2014-2015 school year must submit a completed [Alternative School Application](#). A “new” school is any school which did not operate as an alternative school in 2013-2014 and did not receive a 2014 “-ALT” letter grade.

Schools which were considered alternative schools in the 2013-2014 school year must recertify their status in order to retain alternative status in the 2014-2015 school year. In the second year of implementation, the Department will now begin the process of auditing new/conversion schools; the Department may also audit the student enrollment information submitted by recertifying alternative schools.

The following criteria are required to obtain alternative school status:

- 1) A district school has adopted a mission statement that clearly identifies its purpose is to serve a specific student population that will benefit from an alternative school setting or a charter school that expressly states in its charter that its purpose is to serve a specific student population that will benefit from an alternative school setting.
- 2) The educational program and related student support services of the school must align with the mission and charter (if applicable) of the school.
- 3) Schools offering secondary instruction for academic credit used to fulfill the Arizona State Board of Education graduation requirements (in part or in full) must offer a high school diploma of graduation.
- 4) The school will receive current year state assessment scores for its students.
- 5) The school must intend to serve students in one or more of the defined categories that reflect an alternative school setting necessary for these students.
- 6) All new and converted schools shall be audited for student enrollment verification prior to confirmation of alternative status. All other alternative schools will be subject to an audit of enrollment counts as deemed necessary by ADE and/or the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS).

The following are requirements schools will have to meet to be considered for Alternative status:

- 1) Complete the online application and upload a mission statement.
 - a. All existing alternative schools shall recertify each fiscal year.
- 2) Indicate total enrollment of students as of October 1 of current school year **and** the number of students by **category** based on their **initial** enrollment (List students only once in the defined categories). It is the expectation that 70% of the student population will meet the defined State Board adopted definition of students in need of an alternative school setting.

The approved definition recognizes the following student groups:

- Students who have a documented history of disruptive behavior issues.
- Students who have dropped out of school and are now returning.
- Students in poor academic standing as demonstrated by being at least one year behind on grade level performance or academic credits.
- Students who are primary caregivers or are financially responsible for dependents and, therefore, may require a flexible school schedule.
- Students who are adjudicated.
- Students who are wards of the state and are in need of an alternative school setting.

In addition, schools specifically designed to serve over-age, under-credited students who have dropped out of high school and who, by definition, cannot graduate within the standard number of years may be considered a *Credit Recovery School*. **Schools must confirm credit recovery status on the application by selecting “Yes” to qualify for exemption from the Title I Focus school criterion of graduation rate.**

These schools will be held accountable to the alternative schools low achieving subgroup criteria used to determine Focus status.

Schools will be notified within 120 days of submission of their application or no later than April 1, 2015. Additional guidance on becoming an alternative school, recertifying status, and/or verification of the qualifying population can be found [here](#). If you have any additional questions about this process, please feel free to call Achieve at 602-542-5151 or email your questions to achieve@azed.gov.